

PINOCCHIO'S QUEST



By
Robert Rogland

C H R I S T I A N L I B E R T Y P R E S S

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— Preface —

The classic story of Pinocchio has delighted young people for over a century. During the twentieth century, several different versions of this time-honored story were published which contained a variety of plots and moral themes. Never before, however, has any author endeavored to complete a version of the Pinocchio story that is both morally uplifting and true to the message of the Gospel of Jesus Christ—that is, until the completion of *Pinocchio's Quest!*

As most readers realize, the Pinocchio story by its very nature contains a steady dose of imaginative fiction. The book that follows is no exception. The author, Robert Rogland, has endeavored to present real biblical truth through the use of an action-packed fantasy novel. It is the hope of the author and publisher that each reader will realize that although *Pinocchio's Quest* is fictional and beyond the limits of reality, it is also a work that contains vitally important spiritual symbolism and moral principles that are grounded in the eternal truths of Holy Scripture. The story of Pinocchio that follows, therefore, is designed to not only entertain readers, but to challenge them on a spiritual level.

May God be pleased to use this unique novel to bless the lives of all who read its pages, and to help such ones to begin their own quest to find salvation in the person and work of Christ alone.

Michael J. McHugh
Arlington Heights, Illinois
2000

Chapter 1

I am the boy who was once a log; I am the boy who traveled over land and sea seeking to be changed; I am the boy who was born again in a whale. Many have told my story, but not one of them got it right. I suppose I must tell it myself.

I first saw the light of day in a village so small it had no name. No stranger passing through its twisting streets would have suspected that the two greatest woodcarvers in Italy lived there, unless he turned aside from his business to browse in their shops.

The younger of these masters was my father, Gepetto. Nothing about Father's appearance suggested what an extraordinary man he was. Father was short, plump, and pear-shaped. He had a broad face with hazel eyes, a button nose, and a weak, clean-shaven chin. At the time of my creation Father was fifty years old. His hair, once chestnut brown and luxurious, had faded and shrunk to a grizzled fringe around a shiny dome. His skin still glowed a youthful pink, but lines now fanned out and up from the corners of his eyes and mouth, creating an impression of perpetual merriment.

Father looked like Saint Nicholas; and in our little village he played the part as well. He carved and painted wooden figures: dolls that brought sparkle to the eyes of even spoiled little rich girls; fierce dogs that put cats to flight, tails between their legs; gilded angels so glorious you knew the Lord himself was only a step behind. Father carved soldiers, hunchbacks, kings, crones—every character that delighted and amazed. And the animals! You would have sworn his butterflies, peacocks, and lobsters were real till you touched them. As for his lions and bears, ... well, you would not have dared approach them to make the test.

Our other master carver was named Giuseppe. In appearance he was everything Father was not: tall and lanky, a mane of white hair cascading down to his shoulders, a white beard masking most of his face. Giuseppe was older than Father, but not a single line etched his pale face. His deep-set, coal-black eyes held your gaze whenever he spoke. In many respects, Giuseppe looked like a prophet.

Giuseppe's line was clocks—not ordinary cuckoo clocks like those turned out in every village and town between the great Po

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River and the Alps, but one-of-a-kind creations that displayed the most cunning casework and intricate mechanisms to be found in the kingdom. Many of Giuseppe's timepieces were cuckoo clocks, of course, for some customers could imagine nothing else on their parlor wall. But buyers who wanted something unique always came away satisfied. Many of Giuseppe's most delightful clocks sported a little stage where wooden figures emerged from a door to perform amusing antics on the hour and half-hour. My own favorite featured a butcher waving a cleaver and pursuing a dog making off with his sausages.

Giuseppe fashioned his clocks entirely out of wood, except for the mainspring. None of his masterpieces ever broke down or wore out. Fifty years ago, Giuseppe carved his first clock to grace his own hearth. It hangs there still, keeping perfect time. Father appreciated Giuseppe's work as only another master craftsman can, and Giuseppe was Father's greatest admirer. For forty years, they were the best of friends.

Giuseppe was a happier man than Father, for he had a son, Giovanni, to carry on his name and work; but Father had never married. As a young man Father had found satisfaction and contentment enough in his craft, but as he grew older he began to long for a boy of his own. Thoughts of the son he did not have made Father more unhappy as the years passed. Once he felt pleasure watching a boy or girl leave his shop happily clutching a toy; now he would sigh as bright-eyed children ran home with their prizes, reminded once again that he had no son of his own to delight with his wonderful creations.

Father never spoke of his sorrow to anyone, but Giuseppe knew all the same and did his best to relieve Father's loneliness. Many nights the two men would get together for coffee and dominos. They would talk and laugh about old times, and Father would leave Giuseppe's house in high spirits at the end of the evening; but alone again at night in his empty house the sadness would return.

One spring day Father burst into Giuseppe's shop more excited than the older man had ever seen him before.

"Giuseppe, I just had a marvelous idea! What an inspiration! You can make me a happy man in my old age; you can make me a father!"



One spring day Father burst into Giuseppe's shop more excited than the older man had ever seen him before.

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"Calm down, Friend. Sit here and take ten deep breaths before you speak—no, make it twenty. You know I would do whatever I could to bring you happiness, but making you a father is one thing I cannot do."

Gepetto rapidly inhaled and exhaled twenty times, then went on, just as breathless and beside himself as before.

"Really, Giuseppe, you can make me a father. I don't know why I didn't think of it before. I want my boy to have dark hair, and a nose just like mine, but lips not quite as thin. And freckles—he must have freckles."

Giuseppe cocked his head and squinted at Father. "I'm getting worried about you now, Gepetto. You're talking too fast to be joking and I know you're not drunk. I'm afraid you've become deranged. You must explain how I can make you a father or I'll have to call Doctor Luca."

"I'm sorry, Giuseppe. My tongue has run ahead of my thoughts; but I'm entirely sane, perfectly serious, and deliriously happy. You can make me a father, Giuseppe, only you. Listen, I'll explain."

"This is bound to be interesting. Proceed."

"I'll carve a wooden boy to be a son to me. I'll make him hollow. You'll fill him with gears and levers and whatnot to make him walk and talk and blink and cough and do all the things real boys do. You'll fit him out with a mainspring, and I'll wind him up when he needs it."

Stopping the torrent of words only to breathe, Father went on. "I know my boy will never grow up, but he'll be happier that way. He'll escape the sorrows that come with age, sorrows you and I know well enough. In fact, he'll escape death itself: After I'm gone someone else can wind him up. Well, what do you think?"

Giuseppe sat silently for a long time, his brow furrowed in thought. Father waited patiently, his face radiating a serene confidence that Giuseppe could and would do what he asked. When Giuseppe finally replied, he spoke slowly and gravely.

"Gepetto, I could do it. But do you know what you would be getting into? A wooden puppet that can walk and talk and do the things real boys do could bring you more sorrow than happiness. Children don't always make their parents proud; sometimes they bring them grief. Talk to the Martinis about their wayward Giovanni or the Respighis about their unfortunate Domenico.

They've had their troubles! You don't have the energy you had at twenty-five to discipline a woodenheaded son. Maybe you ought to think about this some more."

"No, I've been through all that in my mind. I want a boy of my own even if he turns out as lazy as Giovanni Martini or as stupid as Domenico Respighi. I will still love him. I want a boy of my own to *love*, Giuseppe. Do you understand?"

"I think so. In a way I too would be the boy's father, for we would share the joy of creating him. I would rejoice with you if he were a good boy; I would feel the same pain if he were bad. A part of me would be in him. Yes, I think I understand how you feel."

Giuseppe stopped talking and thought for a long time. Just as the silence was beginning to make Father uneasy, his friend stood up and grasped his hand.

"Very well. I agree to make you a father. You carve yourself a son just the way you want him on the outside and hollow him out. I'll take care of the works inside. We're in this together, for better or worse."

"Giuseppe, you've made me the happiest man in the village," responded Father.

"Old friend, let's hope so."

Chapter 2

Father wasted no time, but set to work as soon as he returned from Giuseppe's house. He selected a stock of well-seasoned cherry wood, a piece he had set aside in case he received a commission from a duke or bishop. He placed it on the bench and took down the box of charcoals from the shelf. Lovingly, reverently, Father began to sketch my features on the block of wood. He had no need for first drawings, for he saw me in his mind's eye as clearly as if I had been sitting on the bench under the lamp.

When he finished sketching, Father sharpened his chisels and knives until each could split the thinnest hair. Then he began to carve away the excess wood to expose the curly hair, noble nose (just like his own—Father had always been proud of his nose), full lips, and other features traced on the rich cherry wood.

It was well past midnight when Father laid down his tools to go to bed, but my head lay completed on the bench. If I say so myself, he had never carved a nobler face.

The next morning Father hollowed out my head and fashioned my tongue, jaw, and eyelids from other pieces of cherry. My teeth he made of white oak, for strength; my eyeballs he carved of beech wood, bleached even whiter, with ebony insets for the pupils. He did not attach the moving parts to the head, but left that to Giuseppe.

After he had finished carving my head and all its parts, Father made himself stop for a brief lunch and a coffee. Then he began working on my body. For my trunk he chose curly maple; for my arms and legs he selected straight-grained ash, strong and limber wood that would bend without breaking. Father had pictured me as a boy of average height and build, and such he made me. He worked through the afternoon and evening without stopping and finished my trunk and limbs by midnight of the second day.

The third day Father slept in. He was ready to paint me and did not rise till morning light was bright enough to show his paints in their true colors. Father brought me piece by piece into the paint room and hung my parts like laundry on cords strung from wall to wall. From a shelf piled high with tubes of colored pigments

he selected white, burnt umber, vermilion, cobalt blue, rose madder, and black; then he prepared a palette with various flesh tones, auburn for my hair, and cornflower blue for my eyes.

Father was now ready to paint me in all the hues and tints of a real boy. Beginning with the crown of my head, he painted me down to the soles of my feet. If a customer had happened into the back room that afternoon, he would have had quite a shock. My head, arms, legs, and other body parts were hanging there drying, looking like so many joints of meat in the butcher's shop.

Father brought Giuseppe around to see his work.

"You have outdone yourself this time, Gepetto," pronounced Giuseppe after inspecting all my parts. "Anyone would think you were a fiend who dismembers little children foolish enough to wander into your den. Just look at the detail in that face! Freckles, a hint of sun, and dimples, too. And the eyes twinkle even before I've set them in their sockets. The girls are going to be broken-hearted when they discover that your boy feels nothing for them."

"Well, that's the way of the world, isn't it?" replied Father. "Besides," he added, "I'm hoping you can fix him up with a heart and smiles and tears. Walking and talking and blinking and coughing aren't enough, Giuseppe. Can't you make him feel and think, too? That professor who comes up every summer from Torino says men are just machines. Although I know men are not machines, you should be able to make my boy feel and think and act almost human. If anyone can do it, Giuseppe, you can."

Giuseppe didn't reply. The two friends remained silent as they wrapped my parts in paper and placed me in Giuseppe's wheelbarrow. Giuseppe spoke a final word to Father before he departed.

"I'll make your son as human as I can, with a heart and smiles and tears. But I may succeed too well. Such a son may break your heart and bring you more tears than smiles. Children sometimes do that, you know."

When Giuseppe arrived home, he unpacked my pieces and arranged them on his bench. He left me unassembled for several days as he busied himself at the drawing board designing the machinery that would give me life.

When he had completed all the drawings, Giuseppe tacked them to the wall above the bench and began to carve levers, gears, slides, racks, pinions, flywheels, and bearings. He gave me more

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moving parts than he had put in any of his previous creations. To drive the works he fitted me with a mainspring of fine Milano steel, which was wound by a key protruding from my back. Only the key revealed to the world that I was a machine; the rest of my works were greased and sealed inside the body Father made.

Giuseppe brought Father to his shop for the final assembly and winding.

“Are you ready, Gepetto? When I wind up your son, he will behave like a real boy, except that he will not be able to talk. I want you to have the joy of teaching your son to talk.”

“May I wind him up, Giuseppe?”

“No,” replied Giuseppe. “You’ll do that every year for the rest of your life. I claim the privilege of winding him up the first time.”

“How often should I wind him?”

“You should wind him up once a year to ensure that he has all the vigor a young boy needs. Your son probably could go thirteen months between windings, but he would be tired and listless the last month.”

Giuseppe paused. He inserted the key into the keyhole in my back; it locked in place.

“Well, here we go.”

With the first turn of the key I opened my eyes and became conscious of the light. With the second turn of the key I sat up and looked around. With the third turn of the key I stretched, yawned, and hopped down from the bench. Giuseppe picked me up, placed me back on the bench, and held me down firmly with his left hand while he turned the key nine more times with his right. I felt energetic and full of curiosity by the time he finished. I understood Giuseppe and Father perfectly as they spoke, but I myself could not yet speak.

Giuseppe took me by the hand and brought me to Father.

“Gepetto, here is your son. What are you going to name him?”

“I will call my son Pinocchio.”